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SUBJECT: SOME NEW MINISTERS AND MINISTRIES IN MALI, BUT LITTLE CHANGE

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1.(SBU) Summary: President Amadou Toumani Toure sacked both Ministers of Education, altered the portfolios of five other Ministers, and created two sub-cabinet level directors with the rank of Minister during a minor cabinet reshuffle on April 9. The Ministers of Higher and Basic Education fell victim to their own lethargy and incompetence coupled with rising public frustration with Mali's increasingly dysfunctional education sector. One of the sub-cabinet level posts created is charged with overseeing the Office du Niger, and will therefore impact the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and other donors with programs in Mali's major agricultural zone. The overall party composition of President Toure's cabinet remained unchanged as other shifts seemed more the product of internal bureaucratic decisions than political calculations in advance of Mali's April 26 local elections. In recent weeks Bamako - or, at least, its opposition media - has been filled with speculation about the impending replacement of Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe following the failure of his highly touted "Rice Initiative."

The new cabinet changes, however, may have actually fortified Sidibe's standing within the government, and the only Rice Initiative victim appeared to be Minister of Agriculture Tiemoko Sangare who is now Minister of Environment. End summary.

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Two New Education Ministers  
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2.(SBU) President Toure implemented a minor Ministerial reshuffle on April 9, replacing both Ministers of Education and reassigning a handful of other current Ministers to new portfolios. The President also created two new institutions of Ministerial rank - one to oversee the national budget process and a second to manage the Office du Niger, which is Mali's primary agricultural region.

3.(SBU) Mali's new Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research is University of Bamako Rector Siby Ginette Bellegarde. She replaces former Minister Amadou Toure, who was generally perceived as observing the collapse of Mali's higher education sector from the sidelines. Having served as the Director of the University of Bamako since 2004, Minister Bellegarde is an education specialist who is widely respected by university professors and Ministry technocrats. With a university system plagued by crumbling infrastructure, overcrowding, a dearth of qualified teachers, few educational materials, corruption, and chronic student and teacher strikes, the challenges facing Minister Bellegarde are substantial.

4.(SBU) The new Minister of Basic Education, Literacy and

National Languages is Salikou Sanogo. Like Bellegarde, Minister Sanogo is also an education professional. Sanogo recently chaired Mali's National Forum on Education, which essentially served as a stocktaking of Mali's flailing education sector. Sanogo's leadership during this Forum was commended by President Toure and Prime Minister Sidibe as well as by participants from Mali's education institutions. Sanogo has held a number of senior level education related posts.

5.(SBU) Sanogo replaces former Minister of Basic Education, Sidibe Aminata Diallo, whose curious political trajectory began in 2007 when Diallo was transformed from a little known economics professor into Mali's first female presidential candidate. Diallo also emerged as the president of political micro-party, the Rally for Education and Sustainable Development (REDD). During her tenure as Basic Education Minister Diallo was roundly criticized for failing to fully comprehend her portfolios and being out of touch with educational realities in Mali. Although Sanogo belongs to Mali's second largest political party, the Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD), his selection seems to be based not on his allegiance to the URD - which already has two cabinet Ministers - but on his ability to re-energize basic education in Mali.

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Portfolio Shuffles  
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6.(SBU) President Toure tinkered with the composition of three other Ministries, creating one new Ministry and assigning what appear to be two Ministers to one pre-existing Ministry. Mali's economy and finance portfolios are now once again housed within a single Ministry - the Ministry of

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Economy and Finance. President Toure had split these portfolios into two separate Ministries - the Economy, Industry, and Commerce Ministry led by Minister Ahmadou Abdoulaye Diallo, and the Ministry of Finance led by Minister Abu-bakar Traore - following his re-election in 2007. Mali's new Minister of Economy and Finance is Sanoussi Toure, another technocrat who was formerly Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe's Cabinet Director. Ahmadou Abdoulaye Diallo is now Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce. His colleague Abu-bakar Traore is now Minister of Mines, a new Ministry created by splitting up what was previously the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Water Resources and is now just the Ministry of Energy and Water.

7.(SBU) The cabinet reshuffle also created a new position, that of Delegate Minister of Economy and Finance for budgetary issues within the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The Delegate Minister of Economy and Finance is another technocrat, Lassine Bouare, who formerly served as the Director of Mali's social security administration. The new Delegate Minister falls under the Minister of Economy and Finance, though, as a member of the Cabinet, he also answers directly to the Prime Minister.

8.(SBU) Two other Ministers exchanged portfolios, with Agathane ag Alassane moving from Environment to Agriculture and Tiemoko Sangare going the other way, from Agriculture to Environment. This switch may be attributable to the high-profile failure of Mali's Rice Initiative, which was managed by the Prime Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture (reftel). Sangare is a senior member of Mali's largest political party, the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) - a position which may have also figured into President Toure's cabinet reshuffle calculations. Ag Alassane is an agricultural development specialist by training.

9.(SBU) The Agriculture Ministry's work load may be lightened somewhat by the concurrent decision to create a State Secretary charged with the Integrated Development of

the Office du Niger. This position reports to the Prime Minister and will be filled by former Segou Governor Abou Sow. The MCC and other donors with agricultural projects in the Office du Niger zone will presumably now coordinate their activities with State Secretary Sow.

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Comment: Technical Changes  
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10.(SBU) Apart from the changes at the top of Mali's two education Ministries, other shifts appear largely technical in nature - a result that is not much of surprise given that local elections are scheduled for later this month and sweeping Ministerial changes could have altered in unpredictable ways an electoral landscape that is generally favorable for President Toure. Several local newspapers have observed that instead of weakening or removing Prime Minister Sidibe, as many local journalists predicted, the reshuffle has added several loyal Sidibe allies to President Toure's cabinet. This includes Sidibe's former Cabinet Director and longtime friend, Minister of Economy and Finance Sanoussi Toure; and two other allegedly close allies, Minister Delegate Lassine Bouare and State Secretary Abou Sow. Prime Minister Sidibe's ties to former Finance Minister Abu-bakar Traore may have also helped Traore retain his place in the cabinet, as Mali's new Minister of Mines. With gold accounting for an estimated 70 percent of Mali's exports and perhaps as much as 15 percent of Mali's gross domestic product, Traore appears to have landed on his feet - perhaps thanks to Sidibe's influence - while leaving the two portfolios that were previously attached to Mali's mining sector to a greatly diminished Ministry of Energy and Water.

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